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ABSTRACT

Interest is a powerful psychological factor in learning. Middle school students need to be involved in both selecting reading materials and choosing the method of appraisal. Approaches used need to encourage, not hinder interest in reading. Some student projects that have been used as evaluation tools are dioramas, pictures, pantomime, oral reading, and murals. In addition, many projects can provide excellent opportunities for collaborative learning. Some of the 15 additional approaches that may be utilized to appraise middle school achievement in reading are: (1) writing a letter to the author; (2) writing a different setting, plot, theme, or point of view than provided; (3) presenting an oral report; (4) reading additional books written by the same author or on the same or similar topic; (5) playing the role of the author and being interviewed by a classmate; (6) drawing a map of the setting; and (7) developing a test of the material. Interest and excitement are in evidence as students explore, discover, and invent. Middle school students can be very reasonable individuals when following their very own interests in the reading curriculum. Self-selection of reading materials and appraisal procedures encourages, develops, and maintains a life-long interest in reading. (PRA)

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THE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT AND INTEREST IN READING

Interest is a powerful psychological factor in learning. The emerging adolescent needs to experience an interesting reading curriculum in order to achieve more optimally. Middle school students, then, individually need to be involved in seeking, selecting, and pursuing reading materials that insure the attention of the learner. A wide variety of topics for learners to select from in choosing sequential trade books is a must. Reading materials need to be written on different achievement levels. Sequential books selected by the middle school student should harmonize with his/her present level of achievement in reading.

Seminar procedures may be utilized whereby participants have read the same book and are ready for depth study of its contents. Enjoyment, appreciation, and interest are three concepts which a quality middle school reading curriculum should emphasize.

Evaluating Achievement

Emerging adolescents need to determine how they wish to be evaluated in terms of progress in reading. There are

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numerous procedures available. Approaches utilized need to encourage, not hinder interest in reading.

A sixth grade student teacher supervised by the writer guided a learner to make a diorama of content read. The three dimensional scene emphasized neatness, accuracy, and thoroughness of subject matter read. The central idea in the diorama portrayed a different setting than that presented in Where The Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak. The sixth grade pupil was thoroughly involved in developing the diorama and reported on how his scene was different from the setting of Where The Wild Things Are.

Another sixth grade student drew a picture portraying a main idea secured from reading. The learner indicated difficulties involved in determining the main idea since many important facts were also gleaned. The emerging adolescent comprehended content exceptionally well to suggest why other generalizations might also be considered as the main idea. The student could give many supporting details when choosing the main idea presented in art form. Self evaluation was utilized to appraise the quality of the art product. The student was asked by the student teacher:

1. What would you do differently next time when drawing an illustration involving content read?
2. Did you draw the scene as accurately as possible?
3. Which new ideas did you think about to draw when planning your illustration?

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Three sixth grade pupils developed a mural based on content read. The student teacher guided learners in planning their mural. The plan was general, not specific in the outline. This left leeway for these middle school student to be creative in implementing the plan. With creativity in evidence, students may then bring into the mural that which is of personal interest. When questions were raised of the student teacher in how to proceed with the mural, pupils were encouraged to select media and related content to reveal comprehension. Ideas were explored for the mural content. Pupils in the sharing session had a better opportunity to select, from among alternatives, as to which salient subject matter should be emphasized in art form. Interest and excitement are in evidence as students explore, discover, and invent. The completed mural was placed on display in the hallway. Pupils from other classrooms commented favorably on the mural. These students, in many cases, also wanted to develop murals. Thus teaching suggestions used in one classroom may spread to other sets of learners taught in the school setting. Content for the mural came from The Color Purple by Alice Stalker. Here, Celie's character was shown to change through the language of her letters--language which changes with an improved self-concept.

Middle school students can be very responsible individuals when following their very own interests in the

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reading curriculum. One pupil wished to pantomime content read. A few weeks prior to this time, a mime conducted a workshop for teachers using pantomime as a method of teaching. The mime had also visited selected classrooms to show pupils how interesting pantomime can be in ongoing units of study. After carefully comprehending content in a trade book, the student planned and presented a pantomime to others to reveal comprehension. The pantomime presentation was appraised by the presenter in terms of enjoyment, thoroughness, and preparation. The listeners needed to be able to identify the contents of the trade book being pantomimed. The pantomime presented came from content in I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings, an autobiography by Maya Angelow.

A committee of learners developed and gave a creative dramatics presentation. The members had read the same paperback. Collectively, they planned who would play specific roles in the trade book all had read. After clarifying role presentations, the members of the committee play their respective roles in presenting speaking parts creatively. In appraising the self, each learner indicated high interest in creative dramatics, as indicated in questionnaire results.

One highly fascinating activity conducted by the student teacher was to have four to five middle school pupils on each committee, taking turns in reading orally to

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each other. The first pupil reading orally reads a few sentences or reads a longer selection from the trade book. The book is passed to the next committee member for oral reading. All in a committee have opportunities to secure ideas through listening and oral reading. No one is left out of the oral reading activity. Frequently, learners will read the entire trade book to themselves at a later opportune time. Middle school students love to discuss obtained ideas in a committee setting. With a small goup, frwquent chances to interact during the discussion is possible. The quality of oral reading and of the discussion were appraised in terms of cooperatively developed standards.

Numerous additional approaches may be utilized to appraise middle school student achievement in reading.

1. Writing a letter to the author to indicate interest in reading the trade book.
2. Writing a different setting, plot, theme, or point of view than that provided in the trade book read.
3. Presenting an oral report to the class.
4. Outlining selected subject matter.
5. Developing a related formal dramatics presentation.
6. Reading additional books written by the same author or on the same or similar topic.
7. Playing the role of the author and being interviewed by a classmate.
8. Constructing props for a dramatization based on the trade book completed.
9. Designing a bulletin board covering content in a trade book read.
10. Making a book mark which has content from a chosen book.
11. Rating a library book based on clearly defined criteria.

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12. Writing a summary.
13. Drawing a map emphasizing the setting of the story.
14. Developing a test covering main ideas in the reading selection.
15. Making comparisons between two trade books as to likenesses and differences in content, style, and purpose.

Methods used to appraise emerging adolescents achievement should encourage, not stifle, interest in reading. Students individually need to learn more about themselves and about others personalities. Vicarious learning and modeling of behaviors are salient for emerging adolescents.

In Closing

Quality objectives in the reading curriculum need to be in evidence. Self-selection of reading materials encourages interest in reading. Appraisal procedures to determine emerging adolescent achievement should provide intrinsic motivation to read. Life-long interests need to be developed and maintained.

The following, among others, might be utilized to evaluate reading progress:

1. Art projects.
2. Dramatic activities.
3. Written work.
4. Construction experiences.
5. Map making.
6. Test development.
7. Bulletin board experiences.
8. Oral reports.
9. Letter writing.
10. Committee endeavors.

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Reading skills need continual development and refining. There is no end to achievement except increased growth in reading content in school and in society.

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